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A British Meat Cannery in Moldavia (1844–52)

CONSTANTIN ARDELEANU

By the mid nineteenth century, British public opinion was following with great interest the fate of John Franklin's arctic expedition, one of the most daring exploration programmes initiated by the Admiralty. After previous polar journeys and a period in which he served as governor of Tasmania, Sir John Franklin was appointed in charge of a new mission, aiming to map unexplored Canadian arctic coasts and find the mysterious Northwest Passage, the link between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans through the frozen seas of the north. On board two modern steamers, HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*, provided with state-of-the-art shipping equipment and with provisions for a three year journey, the expedition led by Franklin left England on 19 May 1845. After a short stop in Greenland, the two ships, with a total crew of 129 men, headed to Baffin Bay and further, beyond Lancaster Strait. Concerns about the ill-fated end of Franklin's polar quest were expressed in 1847, but the Admiralty decided to send search and rescue expeditions only when, according to the initial schedule, the supplies were exhausted. The first traces of the lost mission, a winter camp and the tombs of three seamen who had died in the winter of 1845–46, were found in 1850, on Beechey Island, in Wellington Channel.¹

Constantin Ardeleanu is a Lecturer in the History Department of the Lower Danube University of Galați, Romania.

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¹ For Franklin's lost mission, see H. D. Traill, *The Life of Sir John Franklin*, London, 1896; R. J. Cyriax, *Sir John Franklin's Last Arctic Expedition*, London, 1939; N. Wright, *Quest for Franklin*, London, 1959; L. H. Neatby, *The Search for Franklin*, Edmonton, AL, 1970; A. Cooke, 'A Bibliographical Introduction to Sir John Franklin's Expeditions and the Franklin Search', in P. D. Sutherland (ed.), *The Franklin Era in Canadian Arctic History 1845–1859: Archaeological Survey of Canada*, Ottawa, 1985, pp. 12–20; D. C. Woodman, *Unravelling the Franklin Mystery*, Montreal, 1991; M. Beardsley, *Deadly Winter: The Life of Sir John Franklin*, London, 2002.

This was the context in which, with public attention focused on Franklin's story, the Admiralty had to face a new scandal, when it was revealed that a large quantity of the preserved meats taken aboard HMS *Terror* and HMS *Erebus* had been supplied by Stephen Goldner, who was at the time being investigated for the problematic quality of his cans. In January 1852, referring to the putrid meats stored at the Royal Clarence Victualling Establishment in Gosport, a *Times* journalist pinpointed the burning issue:

The consequences of such frauds as this cannot be too seriously estimated. Suppose, for instance, Franklin and his party to have been supplied with such food as that condemned, and relying upon it as their mainstay in time of need, the very means furnished for saving their lives may have bred a pestilence or famine among them, and been their destruction.²

The suspicion that the provisions delivered to British expeditionary corps were not fit for human consumption determined the House of Commons to appoint a Parliamentary Select Committee of Enquiry on Preserved Meats (Navy), which investigated about twenty witnesses, officials closely involved in the supply of provisions to the Navy and experts in the canning industry. The final report, presented on 3 May 1852, represented a veritable public prosecution of the manufacturer, who lost all credibility and went out of business.

The connection made by anxious contemporaries between Franklin's tragic mission and Goldner's provisions³ seemed fully supported by the evidence given, in 1852, by Captain Erasmus Ommanney of HMS *Assistance*, who found the trails of the lost seamen on Beechey Island:

Three of their young men died the first year, from which we may infer they were not enjoying perfect health. It is supposed that their preserved meats were of an inferior quality.⁴

In recent decades, this link has been revived by historians, anthropologists and specialists in medical sciences, who still debate the causes that

² 'The Preserved Meat of the Navy', *The Times*, 3 January 1852, p. 7.

³ See, for example, 'The "Preserved" Meats at Portsmouth', *Daily News*, 12 January 1852, p. 6, and 'The Poisonous "Preserved" Meats at Portsmouth', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 18 January 1852, p. 5: 'It is now confidently asserted that a large portion of this fetid stuff was put onboard the ships of Sir John Franklin.'

⁴ 'Curiosities of Arctic Travel', *Littell's Living Age* (Boston, MA), 33, 1852, 423, 26 June 1852, p. 602.

contributed to the demise of the arctic expedition. Medical investigations of the explorers' skeletal remains, which were well preserved in the polar ice, agree that Franklin's men faced a medical disaster clearly related to the meat provisions they had eaten. Thus, several researchers consider that lead poisoning, caused by the method of sealing the cans with a solder of tin, influenced the disastrous end of the mission (lead intoxication causes anorexia, fatigue and weakness from peripheral neuritis, intestinal colic and psychological manifestations such as anxiety and paranoia), whereas other scholars associate the worst consequences of consuming contaminated meat cans with the appearance of botulism type E, which is endemic in the Arctic.⁵

Without insisting on such medical considerations, the interest for Goldner's products has remained great among researchers of Franklin's doomed mission. Starting with the members of the Select Committee of Enquiry, allusions have often been made to the entrepreneur's factory in Galatz (Galați), especially as most products were supplied to the Admiralty from the remote province of Moldavia. Far away from the inquisitive eyes of Victualling inspectors, the cannery from the Danubian port could have easily failed to comply with the quality requirements of the Navy. Although 'the name of Moldavia has been so often intermixed with the canistered provisions of Mr. Goldner and the fraud practiced on the Victualling

⁵ For different medical conclusions on John Franklin's mission, see O. B. Beattie, 'Elevated Bone Lead Levels in a Crewman from the Last Arctic Expedition of Sir John Franklin', in Sutherland (ed.), *The Franklin Era*, pp. 141–48; Owen Beattie and John Geiger, *Frozen in Time: Unlocking the Secrets of the Franklin Expedition*, New York, 1988; W. Kowal, P. M. Krahn, O. B. Beattie, 'Lead Levels in Human Tissue from the Franklin Forensic Project', *International Journal of Environmental Analytical Chemistry*, 35, 1989, pp. 119–26; W. Kowal, O. B. Beattie, H. Baadsgaard, P. M. Krahn, 'Source Identification of Lead Found in Tissues from the Franklin Arctic Expedition of 1845', *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 18, 1991, pp. 193–203; Owen Beattie and John Geiger, *Buried in Ice: The Mystery of a Lost Arctic Expedition*, New York, 1993; K. T. H. Farrer, 'Lead and the Last Franklin Expedition', *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 20, 1993, pp. 399–409; A. Keenleyside, X. Song, D. R. Chettle, C. E. Webber, 'The Lead Content of Human Bones from the 1845 Franklin Expedition', *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 23, 1996, pp. 461–65; Anne Keenleyside, Margaret Bertulli, Henry C. Frickle, 'The Final Days of the Franklin Expedition: New Skeletal Evidence', *Arctic*, 50, 1997, 1, pp. 36–46; Scott Cookman, *Ice Blink: The Tragic Fate of Sir John Franklin's Lost Polar Expedition*, New York, 2000; Richard Bayliss, 'Sir John Franklin's Last Arctic Expedition: a Medical Disaster', *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 95, 2002, 3, pp. 151–53; B. Zane Horowitz, 'Polar Poisons: Did Botulism Doom the Franklin Expedition?', *Clinical Toxicology*, 41, 2003, 6, pp. 841–47; William Battersby, 'Identification of the Probable Source of the Lead Poisoning Observed in Members of the Franklin Expedition', *Journal of the Hakluyt Society*, 2008 <http://www.hakluyt.com/PDF/Battersby_Franklin.pdf> [accessed 25 March 2012] (pp. 1–10).

Office of the Navy',⁶ and 'the preserved-meat manufactory which obtained for Mr. Goldner so unenviable a notoriety' was an establishment which English travellers analysed with great interest when visiting Galatz,⁷ information regarding it is extremely scarce in the vast historiography related to Franklin's lost mission or the history of food canning. Starting from these premises, this article aims to present, on the basis of British and Romanian sources, Goldner's activity in Moldavia, from the origins of his factory in 1844 until 1852, when it was taken over by two other British investors, former associates of Goldner's.

1. *The agreement with the Moldavian authorities*

Stephen Goldner came to Moldavia in May 1844 with a British passport granted in Hamburg. Samuel Gardner, British consul at Jassy (Iași), and Robert Gilmore Colquhoun, British consul general for the Romanian Principalities, based in Bucharest (București), currently visiting the Moldavian capital, introduced him to the reigning prince, Mihail Sturdza, and to other high dignitaries. After preliminary discussions, the investor applied to the Home Department for authorization to establish a cattle slaughterhouse and a cannery in the Danubian port of Galatz, in southern Moldavia.⁸

By a princely charter dated July 1844, Goldner was granted the privilege requested, considering the advantages which local farmers derived from selling their animals and the profits for the Treasury. The agreement contained the following conditions: no factory employing the same technique could be established at Galatz for a period of ten years; the government awarded him the use of the former quarantine of Galatz, with its quays and buildings, the location being granted free of charge, but with the obligation to return it in 'a good state' and without any indemnity for subsequent ameliorations or additions; Goldner had to pay to the Moldavian Treasury half a ducat per head of cattle slaughtered, but all exported goods were exempt from custom dues and any other taxes, the same privilege being granted for the import of tins necessary for his

⁶ Kew, The National Archives (hereafter, TNA), FO 78/901, p. 67, Consul Samuel Gardner to the Earl of Malmesbury, Jassy (Iași), 27 August 1852.

⁷ Laurence Oliphant, *The Russian Shores of the Black Sea in the Autumn of 1852 with a Voyage down the Volga and a Tour through the Country of the Don Cossacks*, 4th edn, Edinburgh and London, 1854, pp. 349–50. 'Before entering Galatz, we visited an establishment for preserved meat which formerly belonged to the well-known Mr. Goldener.' Patrick O'Brien, *Journal of a Residence in the Danubian Principalities, in the Autumn and Winter of 1853*, London, 1854, p. 22.

⁸ TNA, FO 78/608, p. 92, Gardner to John Bidwell, Jassy, 3 October 1844.

manufactory; the contractor was allowed to import cattle, when he could not secure raw material from the Moldavian domestic market, without paying the *Poşlina* (custom duty on imported cattle).⁹

These extremely advantageous conditions nourished a serious and lasting conflict with the British vice consul at Galatz, Charles Cunningham, who, after initially awarding consular protection to Goldner's establishment, completely altered his opinion.¹⁰ The institution of consular jurisdiction, which foreign powers enjoyed in the Romanian Principalities, autonomous states under Turkish suzerainty, was vital for any entrepreneur trading in Wallachia and Moldavia. It provided, besides fiscal privileges, that civil and criminal affairs involving protected citizens were to be handled by consuls in accordance with the laws of their own countries.¹¹ Cunningham's objection, which he explained in several reports, was related to Goldner's contract, which placed the cannery outside the provisions of the Anglo-Turkish treaty of Balta Liman (1838): 'If Goldner made his own treaty with the local government, why did he come to the vice consulate for his maintenance?' The allusions to the commercial treaty of 1838 were somewhat self-interested, as Cunningham, together with the whole diplomatic corps from the Principalities, had protested against its application in Wallachia and Moldavia, where custom dues were lower than elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, he scored some good points in condemning Goldner's monopoly and financial immunities, thought to lead to disputes with other producers and merchants. Consular protection was meant for foreign entrepreneurs abused by local authorities, but Goldner was extremely privileged by the Moldavians. As the contractor was not a British-born subject and was granted an agreement not in conformity with the 1838 treaty, Cunningham declined to offer any protection to Goldner's factory or assist local authorities in obtaining payment of a tax which was not stipulated by the official tariff.¹²

⁹ TNA, FO 78/792, p. 106–07 (French copy of the agreement); Leonid Boicu, 'Industria în Moldova între anii 1848 şi 1864', in V. Popovici, C. C. Anghelescu, et al. (eds), *Dezvoltarea economiei Moldovei între anii 1848 şi 1864*, Bucharest, 1963, p. 224; Emeric Mihály, Sara Mihály, 'Din istoria industriei alimentare din Galaţi în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea', *Danubius*, 1, 1967, p. 238; Paul Păltănea, *Istoria oraşului Galaţi de la origini până la 1918*, ed. Eugen Drăgoi, 2nd edn, 2 vols, Galaţi, 2008, vol. 1, p. 280. A more literary presentation can be found in Tudose Tatu, *Istoria trudită a fabricilor uitate*, Galaţi, 2008, pp. 80–81.

¹⁰ TNA, FO 78/608, p. 98, Vice Consul Charles Cunningham to Gardner, Galatz, 14 October 1844.

¹¹ Frederick Kellogg, *The Road to Romanian Independence*, West Lafayette, IN, 1995, pp. 39–41.

¹² TNA, FO 78/608, pp. 98–99, Cunningham to Gardner, Galatz, 14 October 1844; *ibid*,

Goldner reacted in strong terms and alluded to the assistance received from the British consuls at Jassy and Bucharest when he had concluded his bargain with the Moldavian Government. Considering the vice consul's decision ridiculous, he demanded urgent satisfaction,¹³ so as not to be forced to refer the question to Constantinople and London:

Mr. Cunningham has refused and given and given and refused the British protection to the factory several times as if the whole of the British protection and power were carried about in his pocket. I was unaware that official business was usually transacted in this way.¹⁴

From Jassy, consul Gardner defended the entrepreneur's position, maintaining that the 1838 treaty was not applicable to the Principalities and that, after all, the fiscal advantages were not so great; in fact, the consul was rather inclined to blame his subordinate's stubborn and difficult character, which he often incriminated in his despatches throughout his near quarter-century of consular service in Moldavia.¹⁵ Moreover, he had good reasons to believe that the vice consul, himself an active merchant in the Danubian port, was driven by mere commercial jealousy. The question did not touch any international treaties, unless Cunningham regarded the contract 'as an injurious monopoly' affecting his market 'for the supply of provisions & of tallow for commercial purposes'.¹⁶

With further instructions from Constantinople and London to grant consular protection and all necessary support to Goldner and his operations,¹⁷ Cunningham had, reluctantly, to yield. But it was only the first truce of a durable cold war between the two resentful investors. The consular correspondence is full of mutual incriminations, so that the vice consul's statement in 1851 — 'from the time Mr. Goldner's factory was established here, some seven years ago, until about 18 months ago, I was on terms of intimacy with Mr. Goldner'¹⁸ — is rather exaggerated. The

p. 114, Cunningham to Gardner, Galatz, 24 October 1844.

¹³ He also complained about the attitude of several local officials in a petition sent to the Moldavian prince (in French). *Ibid.*, p. 100 (no references to date and place).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 116–17, Galatz, Stephen Goldner to Gardner, Galatz, 24 October 1844.

¹⁵ Cunningham was vice consul, then consul at Galatz between 1836 and 1860; Gardner was consul at Jassy between 1836 and 1858.

¹⁶ TNA, FO 78/608, pp. 112–13, Gardner to Cunningham, Jassy, 20 October 1844.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17, Gardner to the Earl of Aberdeen, Jassy, 20 January 1845.

¹⁸ *Report from the Select Committee on Preserved Meats (Navy), together with the Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index*, London, 1852, p. 391, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 28 July 1851.

contractor complained to every possible authority about Cunningham's conduct, which caused him an 'amount of damage' described as 'almost incredible' and 'enormous'.¹⁹ The consul-merchant defended his position by alluding to his obligation to protect abused British workers employed at the factory, but it is clear that Goldner encountered 'the most determined ill-will on the part of Mr. Charles Cunningham, Her Majesty's vice consul at Galatz, who exercises the most despotic authority over him as a British subject'.²⁰ This last assertion, made by Samuel S. Ritchie, Goldner's agent and associate in London, is confirmed by many sources, including butcher Thomas Thorp, who stated before the Parliamentary Select Committee that 'the vice consul at Galatz and Goldner were enemies'.²¹ This lasting adversity is significant both for understanding the hostile environment in which the entrepreneur worked in the Moldavian port and for doubting the blame that Cunningham's reports often laid on Goldner.

2. *The manufacturing process and the resources of Moldavia*

Extremely few details are known about Stephen Goldner and his involvement in preserving meats. A Hungarian Jew 'by birth, though not by profession',²² he arrived in London in October 1837²³ and showed a marked interest for the canning industry, then making continuous progress throughout Western Europe (117 patents relating to the preservation of foodstuffs were recorded in England alone in the first fifty-five years of the nineteenth century).²⁴ In 1839, Goldner bought the rights for an improved method of sealing cooked meat into airtight canisters, based on the Fastier system, recently patented in France.²⁵ Two years later, he was granted a British patent for the addition of calcium chloride or sodium nitrate to raise the temperature of water baths.²⁶ The technical process consisted of the following phases: the meat was separated from the fat, put into vats, scalded or boiled, and then put into canisters; 'as much meat is put into

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 408–09, Goldner to Thomas Tassell Grant, London, 21 February 1851.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 405, Samuel S. Ritchie to James Meek, London, 29 October 1850.

²¹ Ibid., p. 396, Statement of Thomas Thorp, London, 28 January 1852.

²² Ibid., p. 397.

²³ Keith Thomas Henry Farrer, 'Goldner's Preserved Meats and the Last Franklin Expedition', *Food Science and Technology Today*, 15, March 2001, 1, p. 20.

²⁴ Simon Gabriel Hanson, *Argentine Meat and the British Market: Chapters in the History of Argentine Meat Industry*, Stanford, CA, 1938, p. 19. The general context can be found in Richard Perren, *Taste, Trade and Technology: The Development of the International Meat Industry since 1840*, Aldershot, 2006, part 1.

²⁵ Hanson, *Argentine Meat and the British Market*, p. 20.

²⁶ K. T. H. Farrer, *To Feed a Nation: A History of Australian Food Science and Technology*, Collingwood, VIC, 2005, p. 15.

each canister as it will hold, and the crevices are filled with soup out of the vats in which the meat has been boiled.²⁷ Afterwards, the lids, each punctured with a small hole, were soldered on and the cans were processed in a bath of calcium chloride solution heated by steam pipes up to a temperature of 260–270° F (125–130° C). After the appropriate heating time, according to product and can size, the steam issuing from the pinhole was quenched with a wet sponge and the hole sealed with a dab of solder. In the last phase, the cans were removed from the bath and moved to a room at 80° F (26° C), where they were held for three weeks. Cans which blew were discarded, the rest were ready for consumption.²⁸

During this period, Goldner established a factory in London and submitted samples of canned meat and vegetables to the Admiralty; as Victualling commissioners were satisfied with his products, the entrepreneur received purchase orders from the Navy. Faced with increasing competition, but also with larger demands from the Admiralty and the private market, Goldner was interested to relocate part of his production to Eastern Europe, where raw materials and labour were much cheaper than in Britain. A native of Hungary, he was presumably acquainted with the resources of the Romanian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. With large surfaces of uncultivated lands or pastures, animal husbandry was one of the most important economic activities in these agro-pastoral areas. For most peasant families, cattle breeding was the main source of wealth. Vital not only for land cultivation and transports, fulfilling their labour obligations on nobiliary estates and for food and clothes, cattle also allowed peasants to acquire the cash needed to pay all taxes due to the state. In fact, the number of owned cattle was the basic criterion for imposing taxes on the household, for distributing plots of arable land and grazing field or for dividing the population into socio-fiscal categories.²⁹ According to the information provided by Jean Alexandre Vaillant, Moldavia had, in the 1840s, a population of about 1.25 million inhabitants and a livestock of 550,000 cattle, 250,000 horses, 1,450,000 sheep, 140,000 goats and 35,000

²⁷ *Report from the Select Committee*, p. 392, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 28 July 1851.

²⁸ Farrer, 'Goldner's Preserved Meats', p. 20.

²⁹ *Romania's Economic History: from the Beginnings to World War II*, ed. N. N. Constantinescu, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 128–29. Several decades later, the Romanian territory had the same excellent opportunities for cattle breeding, according to French observations. See, for example, the report preserved at Archives Diplomatiques (Ministère des Affaires étrangères et européennes, Direction des Archives), La Courneuve (Paris), *Correspondance consulaire et commerciale, 1793–1901*, Galatz, f. 3 (1864–70), pp. 189–97 ('L'élevage du bétail en Moldavie', Galatz, 31 May 1869).

swine, whereas Wallachia numbered 2.32 million inhabitants, 630,000 cattle, 200,000 horses, 2,000,000 sheep, 200,000 goats and 350,000 swine.³⁰ These quantitative data confirm the account given a decade earlier by the French diplomat Charles de Bois le Comte, who referred to the abundance of domestic animals in Moldavia, where the peasants owned, on average, twice as many animals as in Wallachia and three times more than in France.³¹

The trade in live animals and animal by-products was extremely remunerative and attracted many speculators to the Lower Danubian markets. If live animals were mainly sold on domestic markets or were directed to the fairs from neighbouring Austria and Turkey, the Danubian ports of Galatz and Braila (Brăila) were transacting a large variety of animal by-products. Cattle hides, taken from animals slaughtered in autumn (for the tallow), were usually salted, as the advanced season no longer allowed for their being dried; dried hides were only available in small quantities, and their quality was usually low, since they had been badly removed. But the price:quality ratio made them easy to sell on the Balkan and Levantine markets. Sheep, lamb and goat skins were also exported to neighbouring countries, but they were usually sold in the Principalities, being used for manufacturing peasants' winter clothing. Wool was, besides grains and fats, a basic Danubian export; there were three sorts of wool (differentiated in terms of quality) exported throughout Europe, including Britain and France. Nevertheless, the inside of animals (fats, meat, bones) was the most precious and productive part. Danubian tallow was as reputed as the similar product of southern Russia, and was in great demand in Turkey, Austria and Britain. According to a contemporary source, cattle tallow was manufactured by being run into vats, run off once or twice.

The first time gave the cerviş, yellow, which was used in the East instead of butter. The second straining, white, was sold as tallow. In buying the fat in the gross, one-third of cerviş and two-thirds of tallow were generally obtained. The products were generally of high quality, comparable or superior to that sold at Odessa.³²

³⁰ Jean Alexandre Vaillant, *La Roumanie ou Histoire, Langue, Littérature, Orographie, Statistique des Peuples de la Langue D'Or, Ardaliens, Vallaques et Moldaves, résumés sous le nom de Romans*, vol. 3, Paris, 1844, p. 28.

³¹ Constantinescu (ed.), *Romania's Economic History*, pp. 128–29.

³² 'Commercial resources of Wallachia and Moldavia', in *Portfolio: A Collection of State Papers, and other Documents and Correspondence, Historical, Diplomatic, and Commercial*, vol. 5, London, 1837, pp. 289–90.

The cerviș was more expensive than the tallow proper, but the latter was better sold on foreign markets. Goat and sheep tallow were also excellent goods, whereas pork fat was used either in the household (for cooking or for manufacturing soap and candles), or as a lubricant for equipment on board ships. The meat, fresh or preserved (salted, smoked or canned) and the bones found ready purchasers on both local and foreign markets, with Constantinople as a traditional destination.³³

Direct British economic presence in the Romanian Principalities was rather limited at the time of Goldner's arrival in Moldavia. The economic and political role of the Black Sea area had increased considerably since the late eighteenth century, following Russia's new territorial acquisitions and the opening of the Straits to Western trade and shipping. With Moldavia and Wallachia acquiring added value within the context of the multifaceted Eastern Question, Francis Summerers was sent to Bucharest in 1803 to act as British consul for the Danubian Principalities.³⁴ Nevertheless, the changing odds of the Napoleonic wars put a quick end to his mission (1807), and his replacement was nominated only in 1814, when William Wilkinson accepted the office. But his term was as short. After the abolition of the Levant Company, the Foreign Office decided to make its presence at the Lower Danube official. In May 1826, E. L. Blutte, a former employee at the embassy in Constantinople, was charged with the consulate in Bucharest. It was a period of strong Russian diplomatic and military offensives against Turkey, which materialized in the Russo-Turkish war of 1828–29 and in six years of Russian military occupation of Moldo-Wallachia (1828–34). The peace of Adrianople (1829), which confirmed Russia's new status as protector of the principalities, also freed their foreign commerce and contributed to turning the Danubian ports of Galatz and Braila into significant exporters of grain towards the world markets. The conclusion of the Russo-Ottoman Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi (8 July 1833) increased even more the economic and political significance

³³ Details in the brochure published by Vice Consul Charles Cunningham, *Information on the Trade of the Danube*, Bucharest, 1838 and 1841; Édouard A. Thouvenel, *La Hongrie et la Valachie: Souvenirs de voyage et notices historiques*, Paris, 1840, pp. 357–64 ('Note sur le commerce des deux principautés de Valachie et de Moldavie'), and Thibault Lefebvre, *Études diplomatiques et économiques sur la Valachie*, Paris, 1857, pp. 265–73.

³⁴ Paul Cernovodeanu, 'The Setting up of the English Consulate in the Romanian Principalities (1803) and Its Activity until 1807', *Revue Roumaine d'études internationales*, 5 (11), 1971, 1, pp. 187–88; Paul Simionescu, Radu Valentin, 'Documents inédits concernant la création du consulat britannique à Bucarest (1803)', *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, 8, 1969, 2, p. 254.

of the area,³⁵ determining the Foreign Office to completely reconsider Britain's Eastern policy. Thus, after Blutte's sudden death (1834), R. G. Colquhoun, the newly appointed consul general in Bucharest, was to enjoy the support of a more numerous consular team, with a British consul appointed in Moldavia and with vice consuls in the outlets of Braila and Galatz, where large communities of Ionian merchants, British subjects, were involved in trading Danubian grains. Nevertheless, direct economic involvement remained scarce, especially when an enterprise made by the Scottish merchants George Bell and Andrew Lockhart Anderson, who established a commercial house in Galatz (1834), went bankrupt in mysterious conditions.³⁶ It is therefore no wonder that ventures such as that proposed by Goldner received due consideration from the British consuls in Bucharest and Jassy.

Goldner was certainly familiar with the prospects of trading Moldavian and Wallachian animal products when he decided to open his establishment in Galatz. As was the case in all local slaughterhouses, meat was extremely cheap, 'almost considered as refuse', a by-product of tallow. No wonder that 'Goldner always boasted that the meat cost him nothing, the hide and tallow paying the cost of the ox'.³⁷ By combining the low cost of labour in Moldavia with his fiscal advantages, he could achieve a cost of production on canned meat that turned him into a favourite contractor of the Royal Navy. On 28 December 1844, bidding from his new economic position, the entrepreneur secured an important contract to supply the quantities demanded to the Deptford Victualling Yard within fifteen days of the order being placed. The price of meat was 6 d per lb and the cans were to contain twelve ounces of meat and four ounces of gravy or multiples thereof.³⁸ The contract ran for five years and the quantities ordered grew

³⁵ For more details, see Radu R. Florescu, *The Struggle against Russia in the Roumanian Principalities, 1821–1854*, Munich, 1962; Paul Cernovodeanu, *Relațiile comerciale româno-engleze în contextul politicii orientale a Marii Britanii (1803–1878)*, Cluj-Napoca, 1986, and Miroslav Šedivý, 'From Hostility to Cooperation? Austria, Russia and the Danubian Principalities 1829–40', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 89, 2011, 4, pp. 630–61.

³⁶ Eric Ditmar Tappe, 'Bell and Anderson: A Scottish Partnership in Wallachia', *Balkan Studies*, 12, 1971, 2, p. 479; P. Cernovodeanu, 'Implicațiile de ordin politic ale falimentului casei de comerț "Bell & Anderson"', *Studii și materiale de istorie modernă*, 12, 1998, p. 6.

³⁷ *Report from the Select Committee*, pp. 392–93, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 28 July 1851. According to the British consul in Moldavia, Goldner made 'in Jassy large purchases of cattle at the extraordinary low rates of three pounds sterling per pair of good sized oxen'. TNA, FO 78/608, pp. 76–77, Gardner to Bidwell, Jassy, 4 September 1845.

³⁸ *Preserved meats (Navy), Return to an Order of the Honourable the House of Commons, dated 5 February 1852: for Returns showing the Date and Terms of the Contracts; specifying the Quantities fit for Use, as well as the Quantities either Condemned or returned into Store*

continuously, especially as the Admiralty began in 1847 to issue canned meats as a general ration one day a week. It could be justly stated that Goldner's Moldavian contract greatly contributed to this end, and, as agent Ritchie remarked, 'by his perseverance and exertions, what was once regarded as a luxury, and necessarily confined to the few, has now become an article of food, attainable at a cost which brings it within the reach of all'.³⁹

The Parliamentary Select Committee paid much attention to these financial details, the low cost of Goldner's cans being among the only reasons that could compensate for the great inconvenience of having the products supplied from such a distant factory. Thomas Tassell Grant, comptroller of the Victualling Office, stated that, undoubtedly, 'the meat contracted for by Goldner was cheaper than it could have been procured in this country'.⁴⁰ Entrepreneurs manufacturing in England sold their cans at 7½ d per lb, whereas Goldner's price was 4¾ to 5½ d per lb, also depending on the period of the contract and the quantity delivered.⁴¹ According to vice consul Cunningham, 'the cost of good ox beef put up in canisters' was about 3½ to 4 d per lb. The end price was made up of the cost of beef (raw – 1 d, prepared – 1½ d per lb), cost of canisters and putting up (1¼ or 1½ d), freight to England (½ d), insurance 10 per cent, as the products were always shipped in winter (½ d), portorage and petty expenses (½ d). However, this was a rather crude estimate, as the vice consul considered that the meat and canisters cost less than these valuations by about ¼ d each. Goldner's privileged agreement and his excellent negotiating skills allowed him to reduce all other expenses, turning the cannery in Galatz into a profitable enterprise.⁴²

In the Moldavian port, the supplier received the site of the old quarantine, an enclosure just outside the town of Galatz. In the description of a German traveller, the entire area, located between two hills behind a boundary of wooden palisades, extended along the Danube bank for a length of about 400 feet.⁴³ Patrick O'Brien, a British agent voyaging

as unfit for Use, from any of Her Majesty's Stores or Ships, whether at Home or Abroad, London, 1852, p. 2.

³⁹ *Report from the Select Committee*, p. 406, Ritchie to Meek, London, 29 October 1850.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48 (Question 364 to Grant, 16 March 1852).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49 (Questions 377–78 to Grant, 16 March 1852) and p. 79 (Question 526 to Alexander Milne, 19 March 1852).

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 392, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 28 July 1851. Ritchie also stated that 'the expense of freight, insurance, &c., to this country, does not exceed one penny per pound of meat preserved'. *Ibid.*, p. 406, Ritchie to Meek, London, 29 October 1850.

⁴³ Cristina Feneşan, 'Călătoria din 1836 din Moldova a diplomatului prusian Karl Otto

in the Principalities in 1853, mentioned that 'the buildings are of wood, situated within a large enclosure, in one part of which several hundred pigs, with wild bristling manes, were penned up together'.⁴⁴ Goldner began setting up the cannery immediately after being granted the privilege, all necessary equipment being ordered from Vienna. There are no accounts of the machines employed, but most probably they were similar to those used in his London factory (at 137 Houndsditch), which was rated as 'a technologically advanced cannery, using the latest equipment'.⁴⁵ Coal-fuelled steam machines, with the combustible imported mainly from Turkey, made Goldner's establishment one of the largest and most productive industrial plants in Moldavia.⁴⁶

Investment costs were probably covered by a certain George Blogg, diamond merchant in London, who also signed, as guarantor, the 1844 contract with the Admiralty. During his first two years in Galatz, Goldner presented himself as Blogg's agent, although his British partner was not mentioned in his relations with local authorities.⁴⁷ But Blogg undoubtedly controlled the factory, as butcher Thorp stated that he was employed and sent to Moldavia by Blogg, and a broker based in Galatz, John Murly, is mentioned as managing the factory, for the account of George Blogg.⁴⁸ Cunningham even reported that in the autumn of 1846, Murly, 'who had then possession of the factory', only allowed Goldner to preserve beef after the vice consul's intervention.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, after Blogg died in Jassy of typhus fever in August 1846,⁵⁰ Goldner became the sole master

Ludwig von Arnim', *Studii și materiale de istorie modernă*, 17, 2004, p. 41; 'Karl Otto Ludwig von Arnim', translated by Cristina Feneșan, *Călători străini despre țările române în secolul al XIX-lea*, new series, vol. 3 (1831–40), edited by Daniela Bușă, Bucharest, 2006, p. 485.

⁴⁴ O'Brien, *Journal*, p. 22. The passage is also cited in the short appendix ('Meat canning in Rumania for the British Navy') of Edgar Ditmar Tappe, 'Rumania after the Union as Seen by Two English Journalists', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 39, December 1960, 92, p. 214.

⁴⁵ Farrer, 'Goldner's Preserved Meats', p. 20.

⁴⁶ Boicu, 'Industria în Moldova', p. 226; Mihály & Mihály, 'Din istoria industriei', p. 240.

⁴⁷ TNA, FO 78/608, pp. 93–94, Gardner to Bidwell, Jassy, 3 October 1844; *ibid.*, pp. 116–17, Goldner to Gardner, Galatz, 24 October 1844.

⁴⁸ TNA, FO 78/792, p. 152, Cunningham to Sir Stratford Canning, Galatz, 29 June 1840; Boicu, 'Industria în Moldova', p. 224.

⁴⁹ TNA, FO 195/285, p. 641, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 31 December 1849.

⁵⁰ TNA, FO 78/649, pp. 66–67, Gardner to Palmerston, Jassy, 31 August 1846: 'Mr. Gouldner charged with the Factory for provisions at Galatz in which Mr. Blogg was I believe principally interested has taken possession of the few papers and effects which Mr. Blogg had with him.' The answer from the Foreign Office at p. 25, Bidwell to Gardner, London, 21 September 1846.

of the cannery, although his financial situation was far from satisfactory. According to the same inquisitive consul-merchant, Goldner came to Galatz to carry on his undertaking in the spring of 1847, 'but he had no money to make a beginning', so that he drew bills for £1,500 in which he raised money and commenced operations.⁵¹ Goldner probably had financial shortages in England at the time, and the factory in Galatz could have acted as the goose with golden eggs for the active investor.

The cannery was already functional in the autumn of 1844, when the first animals slaughtered were probably 800 cattle, bought in Wallachia before Goldner concluded his agreement in Jassy.⁵² The contractor advertised his business in local newspapers⁵³ and purchased animals in both provinces, but mainly in southern and central Moldavia; he thus became known 'all over the country' among the large owners of herds of oxen and cows.⁵⁴ Contemporary documents do not provide clear data regarding the factory's production capacity, but it was definitely greater than 4,000 cattle processed annually, the estimate given by the Moldavian economist Nicolae Suțu. According to available statistical information, 2,080 oxen were slaughtered in 1847, 2,104 in 1848 and 7,599 in 1849, whereas official documents mention 3,105 oxen in 1847, 5,004 in 1848 and 8,353 in 1849.⁵⁵ Goldner himself, having to pay half a ducat per head of slaughtered cattle, was interested to report a smaller number of sacrifices. In 1850, when the authorities accused him of fraud, a Moldavian confirmed his attempts to frustrate the Treasury, asserting that only the contractor knew the exact amount of processed cattle. 'Goldner wanted to employ him as an accountant, with the condition that he should put down in the register for slaughtered cattle only half of the actual number.'⁵⁶ Beyond this mysterious figure, reliable statistics refer to the export of canned meat from Galatz, which can be reckoned as being altogether prepared in Goldner's factory. The total quantity is almost impossible to calculate, but available data confirm large deliveries for the Admiralty during the years 1849–50, when the entirety of Goldner's contracts were fulfilled at Galatz. British information maintains that the contractor exported from Galatz

⁵¹ TNA, FO 195/285, pp. 641–42, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 31 December 1849.

⁵² Păltănea, *Istoria orașului Galați*, 1, p. 281.

⁵³ *Bibliografia analitică a periodicelor românești*, vol. 1, 1790–1850, part 3, edited by Ioan Lupu, Nestor Camariano and Ovidiu Papadima, Bucharest, 1967, p. 909.

⁵⁴ Păltănea, *Istoria orașului Galați*, 1, p. 282.

⁵⁵ Boicu, 'Industria în Moldova', p. 225; Păltănea, *Istoria orașului Galați*, 1, p. 281, 2, p. 9.

⁵⁶ Boicu, 'Industria în Moldova', p. 226.

2,741,988 lbs of canned meat⁵⁷ but, according to the general returns of Danubian trade, quoted in Table 1 below, he exported at least double that quantity (5,597,616 lbs). It should, nevertheless, be mentioned that he also sold goods on the private market.

Table 1. Export of canned meat from Galatz

Year	Quantity		Value (d per lb)	Total (£)
	Cases	lbs		
1845	34,654	415,848	3	5,198
1846	71,640	859,680	3	10,746
1847	79,293	951,516	3	11,894
1848	81,253	975,036	3	12,188
1849	92,045	1,104,536	3	13,806
1850	107,583	1,291,000	3	16,137
Total	466,468	5,597,616	3	69,969

Source: Paul Cernovodeanu, Beatrice Marinescu, Irina Gavrilă, 'Comerțul britanic prin Galați și Brăila între 1837–1852', *Revista de Istorie*, 31, 1978, 1, p. 642. The quantities were provided in cases for the years 1845–48 and in lbs for 1849–50.

The cannery also processed pork, but we do not have details relating to the export of the large variety of products Goldner advertised in his offer.⁵⁸ He mainly exported the usual produce of a slaughterhouse. Thus, in 1845, ships loaded at his factory 3,164 cans of preserved meat, 1,198 preserved tongues of cattle, 50,127 okes of tallow and 137,299 okes of bones.⁵⁹ In the following years, he sold large quantities of tallow, meat and hides to the domestic market or exported them to Austria, Turkey or Western Europe. The available statistics do not permit us to differentiate his part in the total exports of tallow and other animal by-products from Galatz. Table 2 below is only an indicator of the large trade in these goods in the Moldavian port.

⁵⁷ *Preserved meats*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ As mentioned in Cookman, *Ice Blink*, pp. 109–11.

⁵⁹ Păltănea, *Istoria orașului Galați*, 1, p. 282.

Table 2. Tallow exports from Galatz (1844–51)

Year	Quantity (cwt)	Price	
		per unit	Total (£)
1844	20,480	30	30,720
1845	12,683	32	20,293
1846	12,423	32	19,877
1847	12,020	32	19,232
1848	6,207	32	9,931
1849	3,052	36	5,494
1850	10,640	35	18,620
1851	4,349	34	7,393

Source: Cernovodeanu, Marinescu, Gavrilă, 'Comerțul britanic', p. 642, with data on the year 1849 from TNA, FO 78/829, p. 55 ('Note on the Exports from Galatz by Sea in 1849'); also in 'Commerce of the Danube', *Hunt's Merchants Magazine and Commercial Review*, vol. 27, July–December 1852, p. 293.

3. Goldner's conflict with the Moldavian authorities

During his entire stay in Galatz, Goldner was in a quasi-permanent conflict with local and central authorities in his attempt to secure better conditions for his operations in Moldavia. In 1845, the contractor was accused of having illegally opened a tavern on the property received from the government, where he was selling 'all kinds of liquors and food both to workers from the factory and to voyagers' travelling to and from Braila. At the same time, with the entire neighbouring area serving as a tilery, Goldner had established two unauthorized tile kilns. The owner of the estate protested against these initiatives and blamed Goldner for the losses incurred by his cattle grazing on his fields prior to their being slaughtered. Sued in a local court by boyars Mihalache Străjescu and Nicolae Teodoru, who requested damages of 200 ducats, Goldner hired Mihail Kogălniceanu, the gifted Moldavian statesman and future Romanian prime minister, whom he employed as his lawyer and councillor 'in all causes [...], before administrative and juridical courts'.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Boicu, 'Industria în Moldova', p. 224; Păltănea, *Istoria oraşului Galaţi*, 1, p. 281. In 1847 Goldner also employed Kogălniceanu to deal with the legal problems related to

In December 1848, a commission investigated the boyars' complaint, but Goldner refused to accept the documents presented to him. Thus, he lost the case and was condemned to pay 600 ducats (three years' damages), an amount the boyars claimed through the British vice consulate.⁶¹ In November 1847 and December 1848 the factory was served with two writs of execution, ordering that the moneys be recovered through the seizure and sale of goods.⁶² In February 1849, at the request of the two plaintiffs, the authorities attempted to execute the orders. Goldner refused to recognize their legality, arguing that he had not been summoned by a court of law, and requested that the British consulate put an end to all abuses against his property.⁶³ With the support of the consul in Jassy, and on the basis of consular jurisdiction, the execution was lifted and the issue remained open for further examination. In August 1850, the local authorities renewed their claims against Goldner, who blamed Cunningham's complete indifference in protecting his interests.⁶⁴ Sources do not disclose the outcome of this dispute, but it is likely that Goldner never paid the compensation set for the claimants' damages.

Much more serious was Goldner's conflict with the Moldavian Government for the observation of his 1844 privilege. The problem emerged from the very text of the document, which had two different versions. The contractor maintained he had signed a document in French,⁶⁵ whereas officials in Jassy produced a contract in Moldavian, the papers being liable to distinct interpretations. The dispute commenced from the provision stating that Goldner had the right to import, without paying any custom dues, the tins necessary for his factory. The contractor understood by this that he had 'complete immunity from all dues on importation of whatever was necessary for his establishment', whereas customs officers and the government considered that he was only entitled to import, free of charge, ready-made canisters. Defending his protégé's view, consul Gardner

the attempts of a certain Krodop, a Prussian subject, who wanted to open in Galatz an establishment for preparing, with a different method, salted meat.

⁶¹ TNA, FO 78/792, pp. 153–54, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 29 June 1849. The entire correspondence on this dispute is gathered into a single file. Iași, Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale Iași (The National Archives, Iași County), Secretariatul de stat al Moldovei (Moldavian Department of State, hereafter, SJANI-S), f. 1601.

⁶² TNA, FO 78/792, p. 76, Gardner to the Moldavian Department of State, Jassy, 16 December 1848.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 121–22, Gardner to the Moldavian Department of State, Jassy, 25 May 1849; *ibid.*, pp. 123–24, Goldner to Cunningham, Galatz, 7 May 1849.

⁶⁴ TNA, FO 195/303, p. 375, Gardner to Canning, Jassy, 1 August 1850.

⁶⁵ In 1847, Gardner asked, on behalf of Goldner, an exact copy of the agreement. SJANI-S, f. 1297, p. 17, Gardner to the Moldavian Department of State, Jassy, 5 July 1847.

referred to an error in 'stipulating for the free importation of manufactured canisters instead of the material of which they were made', although only a little reflection was necessary for the government to understand that 'Mr. Goldner could not without immense expense ship from England empty canisters'.⁶⁶

Accusing the Moldavians of violating the terms of his privilege, the entrepreneur calculated, in 1848, the balance of the duties 'wrongly charged by the local government', by compelling him to pay taxes for all articles necessary (tin plates, tin ingots, lead, muriat of lime, coals, etc.) for his production, but also for making him pay export taxes on several animal by-products (mainly tallow). From October 1848, he refused to make any payments for cattle slaughtered until all his financial claims were rightfully observed. The problem was referred to the consulate in Jassy and to Prince Sturdza personally, who, although regretting 'that a contract so clearly stipulated should lead to dispute', agreed to submit the argument to a commission that was to determine 'the justice of Goldner's pretensions'.⁶⁷ The entrepreneur consented to the appointment of a commission, whose sentence 'should be binding upon me for the past transactions so well as for the future', but in case of not getting the expected satisfaction, he was ready 'to remove everything and discontinue my operations' in Moldavia.⁶⁸ Gardner, in his turn, supported the arbitrage, as 'there appears to have been an ambiguous clause in the contract passed with the local government, which should have been rectified the moment that it was perceived, to prevent any possible abuse'.⁶⁹

If the consul in Jassy supported Goldner's claims, his subordinate in Galatz was overtly critical and apparently extremely cautious lest he upset the Moldavian officials. Cunningham was convinced that the Admiralty's supplier was only trying to buy time and use the money before paying it to the Treasury. Pretending he had been forced 'to pay unjustly and contrary to his agreement about twelve hundred ducats' and making it a pretext for refusing to pay duties due to the amount of 3,500 ducats, he could derive significant financial advantages, as 'the use of such a sum for some months

⁶⁶ TNA, FO 195/303, p. 270, Gardner to Canning, Jassy, 7 January 1850.

⁶⁷ TNA, FO 78/792, p. 100, Gardner to Cunningham, Jassy, 10 January 1849; *ibid.*, p. 102, Goldner to Cunningham, Galatz, 2 October 1848.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 92–93, Cunningham to Gardner, Galatz, 17 January 1849; *ibid.*, pp. 94–95, Cunningham to Goldner, Galatz, 16 January 1849; *ibid.*, p. 96, Goldner to Cunningham, Galatz, 16 January 1849.

⁶⁹ TNA, FO 195/303, p. 224, Gardner to Canning, Jassy, 29 March 1849.

is of immense advantage to Mr. Goldner'.⁷⁰ This made Cunningham doubt Goldner's right to import all needed products and carry them from the free port into his factory without paying due taxes. The 'geographical' problem lay in the fact that the cannery was situated about a mile outside Galatz, and the customer allowed him to take out of the free port, free of charge, only ready-made tin canisters, which could not find any market in the province. But Goldner wanted to be allowed to import 'any quantity he may desire of tin plates, tin lead, iron plates etc.', without paying custom duties, a fact which could allow him to smuggle these products and sell them for domestic consumption, to the tax farmers' prejudice. Thus, the authorities wanted to be sure that he did not take more merchandise than needed for the use of his manufactory, and so required Goldner to make his canisters within the town enclosure. But the latter considered these suspicions were unjust, and requested the authorities to secure that proper guards accompanied the goods to his headquarters, and then 'let the factory be surrounded by custom house officers so that nothing goes out'.⁷¹

Furthermore, Cunningham regarded Goldner's financial claims as excessive. Examining his incriminations against the custom house and defending the government's view (itself derived from his own opinions), Cunningham made considerable deductions. Thus, of the total amount which the contractor demanded (33,691.6 piastres), only the sum of 13,085.22 piastres could have been rightfully submitted to an examination, the rest of 20,605.24 piastres being at once rejected.⁷² Nevertheless, a serious difficulty obstructing the settlement of these claims was the problem of deciding who owed him the money. The custom house, which requested Goldner to pay taxes, was farmed for a period of five years at a time, 'and the present farmers only took possession at the beginning of 1848, therefore I do not see who is to repay anything that may have been taken unjustly from Mr. Goldner previous to 1848. It is true it may be said that the government must answer for its officers, but also it may be denied that Mr. Goldner has a right to remain quiet for four years and to bring forward the accumulated grievances'.⁷³ A further difficulty was derived from the fact that the duties were farmed in different branches. Goldner had to pay the duty on cattle killed to the Poşlina of cattle, but the duties

⁷⁰ TNA, FO 78/792, pp. 88–90, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 31 March 1849; *ibid.*, pp. 92–93, Cunningham to Gardner, Galatz, 17 January 1849.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 89–90, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 31 March 1849.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 151–52, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 29 June 1849. The exchange rate was about 65 piastres to the pound sterling and 31½ to a ducat.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 152–53.

unjustly taken were claimed from the Poşlina on tallow and from the Vama (custom on general goods), so that Goldner was 'holding the money due to one man against sums which he claims from others'.⁷⁴

The problems were not solved in the spring of 1849 when, attempting to put an end to these abuses, Goldner was ready to give up his privilege and start paying the regular duty of 3 per cent on the value of exported products, instead of the tax per head of slaughtered cattle. Cunningham deemed the solution as more advantageous for the contractor, as fair valuations of materials imported and of meat exported would have brought him, at the regular tariff, an annual profit of between £1,000 and £12,000.⁷⁵ In May 1849, Goldner announced that production at his cannery had been stopped in March,⁷⁶ considering his contract broken by the local authorities; at the same time, he put his establishment under the protection of Charles Hanson & Co, based in Constantinople.⁷⁷ This brought Goldner the cash he needed, after an extremely difficult period, and secured him the support of the influential British ambassador in Constantinople, Stratford Canning. Hanson sent his agent, a certain George Guarracini, to Moldavia, where he analysed Goldner's financial situation and attempted to smooth his relations with the government. But, by the end of 1849,⁷⁸ Goldner returned all advances received from Constantinople and continued to fight alone for the proper observation of his rights.

The Moldavian authorities were determined to solve the litigation, as Goldner's attitude was 'a serious inconvenience to the revenue. The government requires its whole resources and revenues to meet its expenditure and the particular branch to which Mr. Goldner's payments are affected being farmed, there are on the farmers' account complaints addressed to the government which must be satisfied by it'.⁷⁹ Consul Gardner managed to obtain a temporary suspension of the rigorous measures taken against the entrepreneur, but the new Moldavian reigning prince, Grigore Ghica, was convinced that it was high time 'to proceed by measures of coercion against Mr. Goldner from his habitually protracted sentiment of these claims upon him and from his disputes and quarrels with the authorities at Galatz on each payment demanded from him'.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 110–13, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 7 April 1849.

⁷⁶ SJANI-S, f. 1297, p. 93, Gardner to the Moldavian Department of State, Jassy, 29 May 1849.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 115–16, Guarracini's protest, Jassy, 24 November 1849.

⁷⁸ TNA, FO 195/349, p. 2, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 11 January 1850.

⁷⁹ TNA, FO 195/285, p. 633, Gardner to Cunningham, Jassy, 19 November 1849.

⁸⁰ TNA, FO 195/303, p. 270, Gardner to Canning, Jassy, 7 January 1850.

Thus, Goldner was requested to pay the sum of 1,069 ducats for the 2,139 cattle slaughtered in the period 1 September to 10 October 1849.⁸¹ At the Treasury's orders, the governor of Galatz resorted to the sequestration of Goldner's factory, on 18 November, and the confiscation of large quantities of tallow and other merchandise, so as to balance the money which the contractor owed to the government. Goldner considered that the inimical vice consul was once more behind this manoeuvre and accused him of 'being present to see the military force off to enter his factory' and rubbing his hands and enjoying the fact that 'the local authorities were carrying away immense quantities of property'.⁸² At Ambassador Canning's request, the British vice consul protested against the official conduct,⁸³ but a second execution was ordered and, according to Goldner, on 25 December 'the local government [...] again entered my establishment with military force and with a great many carts to remove property without having given any notice or without being entitled to receive anything but quite the contrary'.⁸⁴ The contractor was also prevented from exporting tallow, all these measures being taken, according to Governor George Ghica, 'in consequence of further duties become due from Mr. Goldner and which he refused to pay'.⁸⁵ The conduct of the second execution is, however, rather mysterious, for the Moldavian official informed the vice consulate that 'it had orders from the Treasury to force the payment by seizing tallow, hides and even beef'.⁸⁶ But the central authorities were perfectly ignorant of this new execution, when a stated quantity of about thirty hides of tallow seemed to have been confiscated by the order of the governor.⁸⁷ Cunningham reported confidentially, but later retracted, that he suspected this second execution to be 'a matter of collusion between Goldner and Ghyka', as it strengthened the former's claims and as the latter had a pressing want of money and was not afraid of punishment, being cousin to the reigning prince.⁸⁸

⁸¹ Păltănea, *Istoria oraşului Galaţi*, 2, p. 10.

⁸² TNA, FO 195/349, p. 24, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 19 February 1850.

⁸³ TNA, FO 195/285, p. 574, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 21 December 1849; *ibid.*, p. 576, Protest to the Percalabia of Galatz, Galatz, 20 December 1849.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 586, Goldner to Cunningham, Galatz, 25 December 1849.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 594, Cunningham to the Percalabia of Galatz, Galatz, 28 December 1849.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 590, The Percalabia of Galatz to Cunningham, Galatz, 26 December 1849.

⁸⁷ TNA, FO 195/349, p. 7, Cunningham to Gardner, Galatz, 17 January 1850. 'A certain Vestiar Teodorachi who is father in law to Mr. George Ghyka is the farmer of the Poshlina on cattle and he having pressing want of money sent a messenger to Mr. Ghyka who proceeded at once to raise money on Mr. Goldner's property.'

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 76–77, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 30 March 1850; the retraction in *ibid.*, p. 154, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 25 May 1850.

These executions brought once more to the forefront the incessant conflict between Goldner and the British vice consul. Cunningham was upset by the independence showed by Goldner, who only alluded to the consular agency when in great trouble. He was also of the opinion that an overt conflict with the authorities was futile and even harmful, the dispute having to be 'referred to Constantinople as none here can judge the Government'.⁸⁹ But his superiors from Jassy, Constantinople and London fully supported Goldner, and Cunningham was requested to grant the entrepreneur the necessary protection, in conformity with his contract.⁹⁰ In his turn, Goldner accused the vice consul of jealousy and of trying to undermine his business. In fact, he complained that everything went well, strictly observed by both parties, and it was only after Cunningham had denounced the contract that 'the Moldavian Government began to levy duties [...] upon all articles which were exempt under that agreement'. Even when he came to terms with the authorities, 'Mr. Vice-consul Cunningham, for some motive or another, did not cease to put as many difficulties in my way as he possibly could; he not only deprived me of the assistance I was entitled to from that office, but most arbitrarily proceeded against my factory, so that I was again compelled to lay a complaint against him before his Excellency Sir Stratford Canning'.⁹¹ If Cunningham complained that Goldner had been 'the most unpleasant part of my duty during the last five years',⁹² the entrepreneur retorted that 'the greatest part of my time has been taken up in these disputes, which ought to have been devoted to the watching over the manufacture of the meat'.⁹³

In June 1849, 'in consequence of Mr. Goldner having adopted a style of correspondence towards this vice consulate which I considered highly disrespectful to the office', and refusing to pay a fine imposed by consul Gardner, Cunningham withdrew 'British protection from you until I receive instructions from my superiors'.⁹⁴ In December, Goldner paid fifty Spanish dollars,⁹⁵ at the request of Ambassador Canning, who also blamed Cunningham for delaying the establishment of the commission named by

⁸⁹ TNA, FO 78/792, pp. 108–09, Cunningham to Bidwell, Galatz, 9 April 1849.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 98, Cunningham to Gardner, Galatz, 29 March 1849.

⁹¹ *Report from the Select Committee*, p. 408, Goldner to Grant, London, 21 February 1851.

⁹² TNA, FO 78/792, p. 89, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 31 March 1849.

⁹³ *Report from the Select Committee*, p. 409, Goldner to Grant, London, 21 February 1851.

⁹⁴ TNA, FO 195/285, p. 580, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 27 December 1849.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 598, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 28 December 1849.

the Moldavian Treasury to examine the entrepreneur's claims.⁹⁶ The vice consul placed the responsibility on Gardner and Goldner (who was to agree to the members of the commission), but the vice consul's correspondence clearly proves that he did not want to be part of these negotiations. Considering the contractor's position as 'exceptional', Cunningham excused himself by saying that 'the consulate of Jassy can alone in Mr. Goldner's affairs be of any use to stay proceedings or to protect Mr. Goldner's interests against the proceedings of the Moldavian Government. The vice consulate in Galatz is powerless in such cases'.⁹⁷ But, in a dispatch dated 31 December 1849, he accepted that the real difference was 'that Mr. Goldner had taken up a line of conduct toward the Vice Consulate which must have ended either in intimidating the Vice Consulate or in forcing the Vice Consulate to some act of coercion or severity against him'.⁹⁸

The executions and subsequent scandals made both parties eager to solve the litigation. On 18 January 1850, Goldner sent to the British vice consulate an estimate of his new claims from the Moldavian Government, after deducting duties on cattle slaughtered. He requested 19,000 ducats (about £9,207), derived from 'expenses for building and erecting necessary stoves & for carrying on manufactory' — 6,500 ducats, 'expenses and damage sustained by the difference in price of tallow, the same having been detained at the frontier until the agent was authorized to pay the duty under protest' — 1,500 ducats, 'expenses at the factory from the first of March till date (7 May) at 100 piastres per week being obliged to continue those expenses, without being able to continue manufacturing till the differences between myself and the local government are settled' — 1,000 ducats, 'my damages for being prevented carrying on my manufacturing and the amount of profit I would have realised I estimate at 10,000 ducats'. On the other side, there were requests for illegal impositions totalling 551,694.30 piastres (17,514 ducats), of which 83,461.14 piastres (2,649 ducats) was owed for duties, with 468,233.16 piastres (14,864 ducats) remaining for himself. Convinced that a Moldavian commission could not solve his claims, Goldner was determined to forward them to a committee named by the British, Turkish and Russian governments, the latter two states in their capacity of suzerain and protector powers of the Danubian Principalities.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 604, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 31 December 1849, with numerous enclosures on this topic.

⁹⁷ TNA, FO 195/285, pp. 581–82, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 27 December 1849.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 639, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 31 December 1849.

⁹⁹ TNA, FO 195/349, pp. 15–16, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 18 January 1850; *ibid.*, pp. 17–22, Goldner to Cunningham and financial enclosure, Galatz, 18 January 1850.

The Moldavian commission gathered in February 1850, the representatives of the British side being the French consul in Jassy, Favre and the head of the Prussian consulate, van Loos, whereas the government delegated Petre Mavrogheni, prefect of police and former civil governor of Galatz, and Major Kogălniceanu (Goldner's former attorney). The meetings took place at Mavrogheni's residence, in the presence of the Moldavian chief treasurer.¹⁰⁰ The discussions were complicated, with the government trying to establish that Goldner 'imported and exported much on account of others and that the number of oxen killed by him in preceding years is much greater than he admits'.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, quickly enough, the commission reached a conclusion, and by a private arrangement signed on 25 February 1850, Goldner was to receive a sum 'of between four and five thousand ducats, from the government, in satisfaction of every claim and the most positive instructions will be issued to the custom house authorities to admit the free importation of all the material necessary for the establishment and the free exportation of all the products'.¹⁰² However, the story did not end here and, as the decisions of the Commission upset many people, in May 1850 a new arbitration commission was formed,¹⁰³ whose results (if any) are not clarified by available sources.

It was an important financial success for Goldner, who consented to receive only a portion of the money he was 'unjustly conveyed to pay for several years'. But it was most of all a confirmation of his interpretation of the Moldavian privilege, which smoothed 'the matter for future operations'.¹⁰⁴ And he had plenty of work to do, as he was engaged to supply even larger quantities of canned meat to the Admiralty. Although complaints about the quality of his cans, found to contain 'an improper substance', precipitated the end of Goldner's 1844 contract with the Navy, he was given, in May 1850, a new contract for 500,000 lbs of boiled beef of best quality in whole pieces. On 29 January 1851, Goldner entered into a similar agreement for another 800,000 lbs of best quality beef, both

¹⁰⁰ TNA, FO 195/303, p. 278, Gardner to Canning, Jassy, 18 February 1850.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 279. One such instance may be that narrated by Cunningham, when Goldner helped Guarricini forward to Constantinople ninety hides of tallow, 'free of export duty, as being the produce of his factory'. TNA, FO 195/349, p. 78, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 6 August 1850.

¹⁰² TNA, FO 195/303, pp. 285–86, Gardner to Canning, Jassy, 25 February 1850; TNA, FO 78/828, pp. 197–98, Gardner to Palmerston, Jassy, 10 March 1850 (Goldner received about £2,500).

¹⁰³ Boicu, 'Industria în Moldova', p. 227.

¹⁰⁴ *Report from the Select Committee*, p. 408, Goldner to Grant, London, 21 February 1851.

engagements having stricter provisions, with a bond of £3,000–£4,000 each against their fulfilment.¹⁰⁵ Thus, shortly before the outburst of the canned meat scandal, Stephen Goldner had won an important battle in the conflict with the Moldavian Government and secured his position as main contractor to the Admiralty, with the factory in Galatz supplying all his orders in the years 1849–50.

4. *Goldner's character and his activities in Moldavia*

The Parliamentary Select Committee, on the basis of Cunningham's reports and of several other statements, alluded to Goldner's bad relations with his employees as a possible source for the presence of unacceptable materials (bones, offal, etc.) in his cans. But it is hard to believe that he was deliberately processing these forbidden substances, as the contracts included severe financial provisions against the guarantors for the failure of his cans, within a five-year limit, because of low weight, the presence of bone, offal, intestines, vegetables, etc., or too much or too poor gravy, or any meat putrid or unfit for consumption due to the collapse or bursting of the containers or any cause whatsoever.¹⁰⁶

An analysis of contemporary sources proves that Goldner experienced several misunderstandings with his employees, far more serious than the causes which Ritchie mentioned after his visit to Galatz, in the autumn of 1850. These problems apparently 'resulted partly from a malicious conspiracy against Mr. Goldner, and partly from wanton neglect on the part of those to whom he had of necessity been compelled to entrust his interests'.¹⁰⁷ It is difficult to state the exact number of workers Goldner employed at his factory. Initially, there were about 150 employees in the cannery¹⁰⁸ working in the meat processing phases (butchers, preservers), in manufacturing the cans proper (tinmen) and in the management of the business (accountants, agents). Ritchie complained that

the labouring population of the place is composed of men of the lowest possible grade, being a mixture of Moldavians, Gipsies, Jews, and Greeks; men who, owing to the long and abject slavery in which they have been held up to a very recent period, are naturally cunning, deceitful, and vicious, possessed of no principle or feeling whatever. It is the labour of

¹⁰⁵ *Preserved meats*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Farrer, 'Goldner's Preserved Meats', p. 21.

¹⁰⁷ *Report from the Select Committee*, p. 405, Ritchie to Meek, London, 29 October 1850.

¹⁰⁸ Mihály & Mihály, 'Din istoria industriei', p. 239.

these men that Mr. Goldner is compelled to employ, and it is only by the exercise of the utmost vigilance and watchfulness over them that the work can be carried on.¹⁰⁹

In need of qualified workers, Goldner brought to the Danube several English employees, possibly from his factory in Houndsditch. Thomas Thorp stated that, at the beginning, there were four British preservers,¹¹⁰ whereas in 1850 there were 'only two Englishmen employed in Mr. Goldner's factory; one of them his clerk, and the other a foreman of the tinmen, who is since dead'.¹¹¹ But few of them managed to stay long in Galatz, the main problem being related to the low wages Goldner paid. Thorp, who worked as preserver for about five years, complained of these bad salaries, which Goldner only paid after vocal protests.¹¹² In fact, this was one of the main seeds of conflict between the entrepreneur and the vice consul in Galatz. The British labourers alluded to Cunningham's help, and thence long and complicated disputes. Thorp, for instance, stated that Goldner treated him very badly, and only paid his wages after he appealed to the vice consul. Cunningham remarked that Goldner was always in dispute with his workmen, 'not only English, but of all other nations',¹¹³ whereas Ritchie blamed the English workers themselves, who, 'soon discovering their superiority over those around them, become too independent to be managed at all'.¹¹⁴ Goldner, in his turn, lamented the agent's attitude, as 'in consequence of the conduct of that functionary towards me, I have very little control over my workmen, and am scarcely master of my own establishment; in fact, I have been obliged to send back to this country all my English workmen'.¹¹⁵

The disputes should also be related to the calendar of Goldner's cannery, whose activity was usually confined to the second half of the year. The animals which represented the chief raw material for his factory were processed between August and December, when the produce had to be shipped before the Danube was completely frozen. Sources do not mention

¹⁰⁹ *Report from the Select Committee*, p. 405, Ritchie to Meek, London, 29 October 1850. According to Thorp, most of the employees were Russian Jews. *Ibid.*, p. 397, Statement of Thomas Thorp, London, 28 January 1852.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 396.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 22 September 1851.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 396–97, Statement of Thorp, London, 28 January 1852.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 392, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 28 July 1851.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 405, Ritchie to Meek, London, 29 October 1850.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 408, Goldner to Grant, London, 21 February 1851.

how the engagements of qualified labourers looked, but it is clear that they were not very happy with the financial and working conditions. During the 1850 season, Goldner had no qualified preserver in his factory, and the technical process was conducted by his nephew, 'a lad of about 16 years of age, who had no experience in preserving'.¹¹⁶ Cunningham's conclusion in a report sent to the Foreign Office in 1851 is wholly plausible: 'If the meat preserved last year has turned out in worse condition than former years, the absence of a proper preserver may account for it.'¹¹⁷

The employer's relations with his workers represent a veritable tragicomedy. As mentioned by Thorp, 'from Goldner's paying them so badly, the workmen were very ill off, especially in winter, and always, exceedingly dissatisfied'.¹¹⁸ Adding to the entrepreneur's character, highly temperamental and irascible, the recourse to violence was common. Cunningham's statement is illustrative: although the 'English workmen never beat Goldner, neither did Goldner beat the English workmen', the proprietor 'was in the habit of beating his German workmen, and his German workmen, to my knowledge, beat Goldner four times'.¹¹⁹ In another case, 'one of the tinmen got about Goldner in such a way as to provoke Goldner to strike him and that so soon as Goldner had struck one, all the tinmen left their work and came into Galatz to complain'.¹²⁰

If improper substances had been found in the canisters, it was the workers who were most likely to blame for the breach of contract. They removed the good meat from the tins either because of 'bad and revengeful feelings',¹²¹ or so as to have it for themselves, as compensation for their low wages. As already mentioned, the provisions of the contracts were severe, and it was not in Goldner's interest to fill his canisters with prohibited substances. Thorp saw large quantities of bad meat thrown into the Danube,¹²² and Cunningham reported, after conversing with one of Goldner's employees, that 'upwards of 200 carcasses of meat were thrown into the river last season in a state of putrefaction'.¹²³ So it was more probable that improper materials were put into the canisters by his

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 394, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 28 August 1851.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 397, Statement of Thorp, London, 28 January 1852.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 392, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 28 July 1851.

¹²⁰ Ibid., pp. 395–96, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 22 September 1851.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 392, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 28 July 1851; *ibid.*, p. 396, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 22 September 1851.

¹²² Ibid., Statement of Thorp, London, 28 January 1852.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 395, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 22 September 1851.

discontented workers, in the context, suggested by Ritchie, of the neglect demonstrated by Goldner's manager, 'who has proved himself utterly unworthy of the trust reposed in him, although at the time Mr. Goldner placed the fullest confidence in his integrity and judgment'.¹²⁴

As for the contractor's relation with his employees, other incidents testify to Goldner's violent behaviour. He was fined by the consulate because, in 1849, he had beaten a Moldavian soldier. Goldner defended himself by saying that 'the injured man at the time was not on duty and was not known to be a soldier but was only to replace the one who was really on duty' and the incident occurred in 'very peculiar circumstances', which greatly irritated him.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, he refused to come to an understanding with the soldier and his superior officers and only paid the fine after Stratford Canning's ultimatum to do so. The same obstinate character is visible in his relations with the Moldavian officials, as 'Mr. Goldner by means of his work people has several times driven away the people of the police'. He even told the governor of Galatz that if they wanted to sequester his debts, they would better be correspondingly prepared: 'if he only sent twenty or thirty dorobance [police soldiers] he would arm his people and drive them away, but if he came with one hundred soldiers he would abandon his factory.' The execution was therefore carried out by a company of regular soldiers, fully armed and equipped.¹²⁶

Concerned to lower the price of his goods and to secure his contracts with the Admiralty, Goldner forced further reductions throughout the production chain. The first phase was the acquisition of cattle, bought all over Moldavia, but also in the neighbouring principality of Wallachia. Thus, he travelled extensively, sometimes distances of 200 to 300 miles, to Upper Moldavia and Wallachia, in order to conclude the most advantageous contracts for his factory. The cost of oxen represented a key element in the final price of his cans, so that it was extremely important to secure good quality animals and have them delivered at the most convenient time. 'The cost of a bullock was just one-fourth of that of an English or Scotch heifer of equal size and quality',¹²⁷ but Goldner always employed the best stratagems to get even lower prices. In 1850, for example, he signed a pre-contract with prince Dimitrie Cantacuzino, who was to sell him 120 oxen. The dealer's obligation was to bring the cattle to the purchaser's cannery,

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 405, Ritchie to Meek, London, 29 October 1850.

¹²⁵ TNA, FO 195/349, p. 28, Cunningham to Goldner, Galatz, 11 May 1849; *ibid.*, p. 30, Goldner to Cunningham, Galatz, 11 May 1849; *ibid.*, p. 34, Cunningham to Goldner, Galatz, 21 February 1850; *ibid.*, Goldner to Cunningham, Galatz, 1 March 1850.

¹²⁶ TNA, FO 195/285, p. 639, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 31 December 1849.

¹²⁷ *Report from the Select Committee*, p. 406, Ritchie to Meek, London, 29 October 1850.

but Goldner, apparently because the cattle had not been delivered on time, only received forty oxen in his courtyard, so as to cover the 400 ducats he had paid in advance. As for the rest, he would only take the cattle 'provided a very considerable abatement was made on the price agreed on'.¹²⁸ The seller complained to the authorities that he had been cheated and had incurred great losses from bringing the animals such a long distance; eventually, the police master and twelve soldiers set free the oxen 'confiscated' by Goldner, after he had publicly stated that the cattle would leave his factory only by the use of force.¹²⁹ It should be added here that good timing was essential for his business. The grass-fed oxen were ready for processing in August, when Goldner usually started working. 'All the oxen are generally slaughtered before the end of September, and then the slaughtering of the cows commences, and continues until the beginning of November.' If in the months of late summer to early autumn he faced the problem of high temperatures, which did not allow much time for keeping the meat between slaughtering the animal and its preservation, in the months of November and December the cattle were fed on hay, which added considerably to the costs.¹³⁰ At the same time, an early winter could prevent his shipping the goods, and thus imperil his contracts.

Goldner also enforced his agreement regarding permission to import cattle, free of duty, only when he could not secure all the necessary raw materials from the Moldavian market. As Galatz was located on the border between Moldavia and Wallachia, it was profitable to buy cattle in Wallachia. In 1849, for example, he brought to Galatz 600 Wallachian cattle, but in August 1850 the Moldavian authorities refused to receive the imported animals, as Goldner could not prove he had not found cattle on the domestic market, and as an epidemic was raging in Wallachia. But he was always insistent and, with the support of the consul in Jassy, usually succeeded in getting the exemptions.¹³¹

It has also been stated that one of the problems with the cans was related to the establishment being essentially a tallow factory, with tallow as his

¹²⁸ TNA, FO 195/349, pp. 180–81, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 8 June 1850, with numerous enclosures on this affair; TNA, FO 195/303, p. 367, Gardner to Canning, Jassy, 11 July 1850.

¹²⁹ TNA, FO 195/349, p. 192, Goldner to Cunningham, Galatz, 7 June 1850; *ibid.*, p. 196, report on the execution, Galatz, 7 June 1850; *ibid.*, pp. 202–03, The Percalabia of Galatz to Cunningham, Galatz, 8 June 1850.

¹³⁰ *Report from the Select Committee*, p. 395, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 28 August 1851.

¹³¹ SJANI-S, f. 1297, p. 101, Goldner's petition, Galatz, 13 August 1849; *ibid.*, p. 100, Gardner to the Moldavian Department of State, Jassy, 4 September 1849.

primary product. Cunningham reported, on the basis of his 'knowledge and observation', that Goldner 'made the production of tallow the first and chief object and that of meat quite secondary',¹³² and that 'meat was sacrificed to the tallow'.¹³³ This was no secret: Goldner could secure low prices for his cans precisely by covering the cost of the animals through trading their tallow and hides. There do not seem to have been any significant problems with the quality of the meat itself, but rather with 'improper substances' or material 'not according to contract' (bones, offal, intestines). The report published in January 1852 proves that the cans condemned at the Royal Clarence Yard in Gosport contained mostly 'such substances as pieces of heart, roots of tongues, pieces of palates, pieces of tongues, coagulated blood, pieces of liver, ligaments of the throat, pieces of intestines' and were putrefying.¹³⁴ But when analysing the rejection rate of Goldner's cans, T. T. Grant estimated the proportion condemned at 5 per cent of the 2.74 million lbs delivered to the Admiralty. The comptroller of the Victualling emphasized that less than 0.25 per cent contained 'improper substances'; the remainder was good meat which was putrefying. Thus, the problem was related to the technical process employed and the quality of the canisters, especially as most deficiencies were recorded with the large cans (ten lbs and upwards), many of them failing through mechanical damage due to careless handling or stowage on board ships.¹³⁵ These were also the main causes Ritchie identified at Goldner's factory: 'The cases where the meat has been found bad from defective preserving' and 'where this result has arisen from defective canisters'.¹³⁶ But, to conclude, there was no fundamental incompatibility in getting, from healthy cattle, both good quality tallow and excellent meat.

Sources do not mention cases of a faulty technical process which, if carried out fairly and properly, was excellent. But some problems might have been derived from another phase in which Goldner could get significant reductions of the end price of his goods: delivering the canisters to England. When shipping a cargo of beef in the autumn of 1848, the contractor freighted a large brig built at Galatz, paying 25 per cent less than

¹³² *Report from the Select Committee*, p. 391, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 28 July 1851.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 394, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 28 August 1851.

¹³⁴ 'Putrid "Preserved" Meat', *The Lancet: A Journal of British and Foreign Medicine, Physiology, Surgery, Chemistry, Criticism, Literature and News*, 2, 10 January 1852, p. 52.

¹³⁵ T. K. Derry, T. I. Williams, *A Short History of Technology from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1900*, New York, 1961, p. 696.

¹³⁶ *Report from the Select Committee*, p. 402, Ritchie to Meek, London, 29 October 1850.

for a British vessel, and having 'an advantage of £550 besides advantages in paying advances at a high premium'. He also convinced the ship-owner to cover the extra insurance which he might have to pay over and above what an Austrian or British vessel would have cost. Then, in London, 'without saying he had shipped in an inferior vessel' and alluding to the very high premium he had paid, 'from anxiety to send forward supplies', he persuaded the Admiralty to grant him subsidies. 'Thus Mr. Goldner getting 4% from the master of the vessel and 5% from the Admiralty only pays 1% insurance.'¹³⁷ Since the ship had problems leaving the Danube, it probably took longer to reach England. Sometimes, due to the late season, the frozen Danube incurred further delays and additional physical effects on the canisters, which could be 'very much indented and bruised'. Their transport was problematic, as well as their stowing in casks, which proved to be completely wrong: 'one canister is knocked against another', and 'a great deal of injury does arise to the canisters from the manner in which they are treated after they leave the contractor's hands'.¹³⁸

5. *The official investigation and fate of Goldner's factory*

In April 1851, the Admiralty asked the Foreign Office 'to instruct Her Majesty's consul, or other government agent at the above-named place, to inspect and report on the mode of cure, and preparation of these preserved meats'. The measure was dictated by 'the serious complaints which have been made from the seamen of the fleet, of the inferiority of the meat; and the canisters, in many instances, containing the offal and parts of the intestines of the animals'.¹³⁹ Thus, on 14 May 1851, the Under Secretary of State Henry Unwin Addington instructed Cunningham 'to act as government inspector for behalf of the admiralty on preserved meats to be prepared by Mr. Goldner'.¹⁴⁰ But the vice consul did not have the opportunity to inspect his enemy's factory, where cattle processing only commenced later in the year, and the contract was interrupted in June 1851. Nevertheless, the authorities were anxious 'to obtain any information with reference to the system pursued by Mr. Goldner in preserving provisions for the naval service'.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ TNA, FO 78/792, pp. 116–17, Cunningham to Canning, Galatz, 8 April 1849.

¹³⁸ *Report from the Select Committee*, p. xiv.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 390, J. Parker to H. U. Addington, London, 26 April 1851.

¹⁴⁰ TNA, FO 78/865, p. 4, Addington to Cunningham, London, 14 May 1851; *ibid.*, p. 206, Cunningham to Palmerston, Galatz, 23 June 1851.

¹⁴¹ *Report from the Select Committee*, p. 390, W. A. B. Hamilton to Addington, London, 3 June 1851.

Goldner tried to defend his position and alluded to all his problems, but the unrest was too great at home. Public pressure was mounting and, following the inspection of his products, on 16 February 1852 the House of Commons appointed fifteen people to serve as the Select Committee on Preserved Meats (Navy). Their investigation meant interviewing about twenty witnesses, officials closely involved in the supply of provisions to the Navy and others actively engaged in canning, but Stephen Goldner did not appear before the Committee. The official report, presented on 3 May and published thereafter had significant consequences for the manner in which the Admiralty concluded its contracts for preserved meats and determined the setting up of its own canning factory, in Deptford in 1852.¹⁴²

Goldner was completely compromised and his involvement in the canning industry is not mentioned thereafter. In fact, sources are not clear as to his fate after his public incrimination. As for his factory in Galatz, it was placed, in January 1852, when the contractor left the Danubian port, in the charge of the vice consulate. It was later sequestered by an Austrian, Marrasi, and the execution lifted when two former associates, Alfred Powell and Samuel Ritchie, came to Galatz and probably covered Goldner's debts.¹⁴³ Gardner, the British consul in Jassy, asked the Foreign Office for further instructions, as he was uncertain how Goldner and Ritchie were to be regarded.¹⁴⁴ By the summer of 1852, the two new contractors 'were anxious to have the privilege renewed by which they alone should have the right of preserving meat in air proof canisters, but more particularly they were anxious to obtain a renewal of the lease of the ground where the factory has hitherto stood'.¹⁴⁵ Their terms were accepted and, learning from Goldner's problems, they employed a qualified labour force of British preservers. By 1853, twenty English butchers were working at Galatz. The factory remained in use for about two more decades, until 1875, when the machines were sold by public auction.¹⁴⁶

Goldner's commercial venture in Moldavia is certainly decisive in understanding the character of 'the culprit' in the tragic fate of John Franklin's lost mission. 'An evil man', practising 'a shadowy, yet

¹⁴² Perren, *Taste, Trade and Technology*, p. 41.

¹⁴³ TNA, FO 78/901, pp. 72–73, Cunningham to Gardner, Galatz, 12 August 1852.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 67–68, Gardner to Malmesbury, Jassy, 27 August 1852. Gardner had many rather rhetorical questions: 'In what light am I to regard him [Goldner]? As a defaulter under the imputation of fraud? And in what light am I to regard Mr. Ritchie?'

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 324, Cunningham to Gardner, Galatz, 6 December 1852.

¹⁴⁶ Păltănea, *Istoria oraşului Galaţi*, 2, p. 11.

well-calculated, art of deceit', the contractor was portrayed by both contemporaries and modern historians as the usual suspect of premeditated crime, in his pursuit of 'profit without conscience or qualm, with no regard for life'.¹⁴⁷ A detailed scrutiny of available sources depicts him as an extremely clever and ingenious businessman, capable of innovation not only in the technological process of his business, but also in its economic dimension. An 'active shrewd man', as Gardner described him, Goldner had an irascible character which greatly affected his personal and professional relations. He was constantly bargaining, disagreeing, arguing, quarrelling and fighting, while his opponents covered the entire social spectrum, from the prince and the local authorities to his own employees. His investment in Moldavia is the story of a stubborn man, clinging to his rights, real or imagined, irrespective of the consequences. Goldner was not so much the victim of his opponents as of his temperament, which consumed his time and energy in disputes often collateral to his business.

It is unclear how his factory in Hounsdtich fared during the seven years in which he administered the cannery in Galatz. The fact that he spent most of his time in the Danubian Principalities may suggest that it was his chief commercial preoccupation, perhaps the solution to his financial problems in England, or the way to making a fortune in this Eastern agro-pastoral El Dorado. Goldner showed 'labour, talent, and industry', but he also showed an incapacity to develop a long-term advantageous business enterprise in Moldavia by estranging all those persons or institutions which might have helped him. From his personal and professional relations with his workers to his inability to maintain the service of qualified labourers, from his struggle to get a monopoly of the local market to his continuous disputes with the State Treasury, Goldner proved himself parsimonious and greedy. In a province where Turkish baksheesh was well rooted, the contractor did not always choose the easiest resolutions. His conflict with the British vice consul in Galatz virtually deprived him of the advantage of consular jurisdiction and earned him an enemy who proved as stubborn and resentful as himself. Thus, Goldner had to deal with additional problems and useless conflicts, which impaired his situation in Moldavia. Once his reputation was compromised in Britain, he immediately lost all protection in Moldavia, and also from the few people who were still supporting him.

But Goldner does not appear a criminal ready to put lives in danger for the sake of a profit, although sources depict him as a rapacious

¹⁴⁷ Cookman, *Ice Blink*, pp. 108–10.

capitalist,¹⁴⁸ interested in acquiring unfair benefits from his business. From this perspective, he was one of the pioneers of Western capitalism in the Romanian Principalities; sensing the huge possibilities of bringing advanced technology to these peripheral European areas, endowed with rich and cheap agro-pastoral resources, Goldner was a veritable economic founder, who nourished similar initiatives in Wallachia and Moldavia. Goldner's factory in Galatz proved economically viable and managed to stay up and running for a further two decades. In the meat preserving industry, Goldner proved to be an explorer as innovative as Franklin had been in mapping the arctic regions.

¹⁴⁸ Bruce C. Paton, *Adventuring with Boldness: The Triumph of the Explorer*, Golden, CO, 2006, p. 109.